

Thank you, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Hollings, and Members of the Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today about something that is near and dear to me—the effects of legal gambling on college sports.

In my 36 years as a coach of the University of Nebraska football team, I witnessed firsthand the negative impact gambling can have on college athletics. The following observations are based upon some of the experiences and insights gained in coaching.

A) Organized gambling is bad for the game. The emphasis goes from that of appreciation for excellence and skill to point spreads and monetary gain. The best interests of athletic competition are served in an atmosphere that is conducive to good sportsmanship and respect for opponents. Gambling creates an environment antithetical to wholesome competition and sometimes creates doubt as to the integrity of the contest.

B) Organized gambling often has a negative impact on the fans. The point spread is an arbitrary number that supposedly reflects the true strength of competing teams. Sometimes the point spread is based on inaccurate or incomplete information. Point spreads are published in nearly every newspaper and are mentioned on television and radio newscasts to the degree where fans' expectations are largely shaped by information from the gambling industry. If a team is favored by 28 points and wins by three, in the minds of many fans the win is really a loss. If, on the other hand, a team is a 21-point underdog and only loses by seven points, the loss is viewed in a more favorable light. I recall talking to some fans whose team had just won the first national championship in school

history, yet, rather than being excited they were disappointed because their team, a 17-point favorite, had won by only two points. Fans often have a difficult time seeing the athletic contest for what it was meant to be, that of a contest of skill, intelligence and endurance, because they get lost in the economics of gambling.

C) Organized gambling is bad for coaches. Many times the coach is expected to win twice—once on the scoreboard and once by beating the point spread. A coach in charge of a team listed as a 35-point favorite starts the game behind 35-0 in the minds of the gambling community, which includes a high percentage of fans. If the coach's team is heavily favored and is tied at halftime, there is a good chance that the team and the coach will be booed at halftime. Most of the truly ugly incidents that I encountered in my coaching profession were related to gambling. I have had a mailbox blown up, a few death threats, obscene phone calls in the middle of the night, and have heard the very common complaint that "You cost me  $x$  amount of dollars." Since we did not beat the point spread, the person who lost the bet held the coach personally accountable for the gambling loss. Many times it is highly unpopular with fans to substitute second- and third-team players once the outcome of the contest has been decided if the point spread has not been beaten. The second- and third-team players need the experience and greatly appreciate the opportunity to play yet their appearance in the game is not greeted with enthusiasm if it might jeopardize beating the point spread. Similarly, not scoring a late touchdown or basket by letting the clock run out is viewed with great displeasure if there are point spread implications.

D) Organized gambling is bad for the players. There is a huge amount of gambling on college campuses. This activity is heavily influenced by point spreads. Very few athletic contests are viewed as even matches; therefore, point spreads are established to provide bookies with a basis for gambling odds. Players sometime accumulate gambling debts, and, when a debt grows to a certain magnitude, pressures are put upon the player to alter his/her play in the game to affect the point spread. A great many of the point shaving incidents that have hurt college athletics so badly and have left the athletes in dire straights have been prompted by gambling debts that have mounted to the point where the athlete sees no other way to pay for the debt.

Gambling intensifies pressure on athletes. The player shooting a free throw with only two seconds left in a game in which his team has been favored by ten points and is leading by nine is unnecessarily pressured. The game is over as far as the win or loss column, yet making the free throw can result in millions of dollars changing hands.

Gambling on intercollegiate athletics is illegal everywhere but Las Vegas. It is in the best interests of everyone involved in intercollegiate athletics to have gambling banned everywhere in the United States.

Thank you again, Chairman McCain and Members of the Committee for allowing me to speak to you today about this very important issue. It is seldom I get to speak on an issue here in Congress in which I have so many years of experience dealing first hand with the issue and I appreciate the opportunity to do so today.